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PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
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May 13, 1985

To: Neighbourhoods Committee

Subject: Proposed Community Centre - North Toronto

Origin: Commissioner of Parks and Recreation and Commissioner of Planning and Development (c36nhc85079:12p)

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Municipal Reference

Comments:

On January 18, 1985, City Council adopted Executive Committee Report No. 4 authorizing the establishment of a North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee which inter alia would conduct a comprehensive needs and resources assessment of the area.

Today you have before you the "Final Needs and Resources Assessment Report" from the Working Committee. Staff of both of our Departments have worked closely with the Working Committee since its inception early in the year and we are pleased to advise that we are in support of the recommendations as outlined in the attached report.

From the beginning of this planning exercise, the Working Committee has benefited from the active participation and support of the existing services and facility groups in North Toronto. Our work to date is intended to support and encourage these operations, not to supplant them.

With respect to recommendation no. 4, "That Council address the problems expressed by the community arising from the current use of the North Toronto Memorial Gardens and Arena and Eglinton Park", we would suggest that this be done in concert with the existing Board of Management.

Recommendation:

That your Committee adopt the recommendations of the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee as presented in the document,

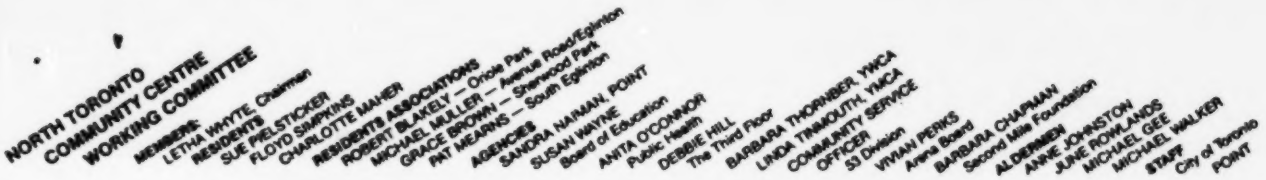
"Final Needs and Resources Assessment Report" with the amendment as suggested above.

Commissioner of Planning
and Development.

Commissioner of Parks
and Recreation.

___:LD
PAO

Attachment.



NORTH TORONTO COMMUNITY CENTRE WORKING COMMITTEE

Final Needs and Resources Assessment Report

Executive Summary

Introduction

Council adopted the Final Report of the Community Task Force on Neighourhoods, Social and Recreational Services in July of 1982. This report set out explicit procedural guidelines for future development of Community and Recreation Centres. When a proposed Community Centre was set out as a future project in the 1985 Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Budget, the guidelines were followed in initiating a community planning structure. Council formally recognized the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee at its first meeting in the new year. The attached report presents the composition and work programme of the Working Committee, its principal findings regarding local needs and resources and its conclusions and recommendations for a new Community Centre and other actions.

While I will let the report speak for itself and will only present the principal conclusions and recommendations in this summary, I feel that several important points should be put up front. First, the Working Committee took very seriously its mandate to test rigorously the case for a new Centre. It made extensive use of the resources of POINT (People and Organizations in North Toronto), our own experienced and dedicated members and, collectively, a wide system of contacts and sources in gathering and analyzing information. In all of our endeavours, we were very ably assisted by staff from the Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation Departments.

Secondly, rather than simply press a historical claim and buttress it with data from secondary sources, we posed the question directly to our community. A diverse array of approaches was used to develop and double check information and conclusions, including numerous interagency and community meetings, organization and user surveys and the development of new resources such as our matrix and maps. Finally, we feel and certainly have reaffirmed the fact that North Toronto uses available resources well. Our recommendation for a new Community Centre in North Toronto is spurring us to make fresh efforts in this regard.

Conclusions:

1) A new Community Centre would complement existing services and would relieve pressure felt by churches, Community Centres and school facilities with respect to the demand for additional space. With an information and resource service, this Centre could help to put people in touch with other programmes in Toronto.

2) The Community Centre should be a fully accessible, multi-purpose facility offering a mix of structured and unstructured programming on a year round basis.

3) With reference to the unmet needs identified above, the Centre's role would be to provide a mix of leisure, recreational activities and supportive or developmental programmes. For programmes which could not be appropriately accommodated at the new Centre, the Working Committee would seek out alternate locations.

4) Some specific proposals for further consideration are:

   - o a senior's component offering a variety of recreational, social, educational and health programmes in one location;
   - o a licenced, full-service Day Care Centre;
   - o integrated programming for people with special needs such as seniors, disabled, etc.;
   - o special facilities for drama, music, dance or arts activities; and
   - o organized programming focused on teens.

5) Given our facility resources assessment, we are recommending to Council that a new Community Centre to be located in Eglinton Park should consist of at least a 25 meter pool, a regulation gym, one or more multi-purpose rooms, some office space and a resource/information service.

6) We have recommended that People and Organizations in North Toronto (POINT) with assistance from the City respond to the interest expressed by many churches to develop more effective and efficient programming and use of existing church facilities.

7) A proposal was made by the North Toronto Hockey Association to permanently enclose the outdoor ice rinks. This new structure would have an adverse impact on the park and valuable outdoor programmes would be lost. While the Committee recognized the

need for more community ice hockey time, we are not recommending this proposal but instead are referring this group to the Arena Board for further negotiations.

8) We are recommending to Council that approaches be made to the Toronto Board of Education regarding its community use of space policies so as to make local school facilities more available to the local community.

9) We are recommending to Council that it address the problems expressed by the community arising from the current use of the North Toronto Memorial Gardens and Arena and Eglinton Park.

Recommendations:

1. That Council adopt this report of the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee as its agreement in principle to the creation of a new Community Centre in North Toronto.

2. That Council authorize the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee to proceed development of programming, site and building design, management model concepts including associated capital and operating cost implications and to report back.

3. That Council approach the Board of Education for the City of Toronto regarding its community use of space policies so as to make local school facilities available to their local communities.

4. That Council address the problems expressed by the community arising from the current use of the North Toronto Memorial Gardens and Arena and Eglinton Park.

Letha Whyte

Letha Whyte, Chairperson
North Toronto Community
Centre Working Committee

NORTH TORONTO COMMUNITY CENTRE WORKING COMMITTEE
MEMBERS:
RESIDENTS
LETHA WHYTE, Chairman
SUE PRELSTICKER
FLOYD SIMPKINS
CHARLOTTE MAHER
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS
ROBERT BLAKELY — Oriole Park
MICHAEL MULLER — Avenue Road/Eglinton
GRACE BROWN — Sherwood Park
PAT MEARNS — South Eglinton
AGENCIES
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SUSAN WAYNE
Board of Education
ANITA O'CONNOR
Public Health
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VIVIAN PERKS
Arena Board
BARBARA CHAPMAN
Second Mile Foundation
ALDERMEN
ANNE JOHNSTON
JUNE ROWLANDS
MICHAEL GEE
MICHAEL WALKER
STAFF
City of Toronto
POINT

NORTH TORONTO COMMUNITY CENTRE WORKING COMMITTEE

1.1 Introduction

When City Council adopted the Final Report of the Community Task Force on Neighbourhoods, Social and Recreational Services in July 1982, this included explicit "Procedures for Future Development of City Funded Recreation and Community Centres" (Appendix "F"). These principles seem central to Council's thinking:

(1) that all proposals for City supported Recreation or Community Centres must be based on a thorough study of local needs and resources;

(2) that greater consideration would be given to studies involving the active participation of local residents, community and recreation services in the local area and representation from the Departments of Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation; and

(3) that Council have several opportunities during the development of a Centre proposal for review and comment.

The North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee was established with these principles in mind. This is our first report to City Council. It will in turn: briefly review the structure and composition of the Working Committee and its work programme, review the types of information gathering and public feedback we used, provide details of our needs and resources assessment work and present our recommendations for Council's consideration and approval.

1.2 Organization

Starting from the inclusion of a proposed Community Centre in North Toronto as a future item in the 1985 Parks and Recreation Department's Capital Budget and with the support of the Ward 10 and 11 Aldermen, a community planning process was initiated in October of 1984. Representatives from the Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation Departments approached People and Organizations in North Toronto (POINT) to assist in establishing a Working Committee.

As a long-standing social planning and community advocacy group, POINT has wide-spread resident and agency contacts in North Toronto and was seen to be an ideal starting point. I

agreed to serve as the proposed Chairperson for the Working Committee and POINT seconded their part-time Co-ordinator to assist the group along with staff from the Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation Departments. As can be seen from our letterhead, we succeeded in recruiting 22 interested individuals. Collectively, we include: representatives from four Resident Associations, three at-large community members, representatives from nine agencies serving the local area and the four Ward Aldermen. Council officially endorsed the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee as the planning body for the proposed Centre at its first meeting in January 1985.

To conduct the actual research and community outreach tasks determined by the Working Committee, two Sub-Committees were struck. As making the North Toronto community aware of and well-informed about our activities is of great importance, a Communications Sub-Committee was established. This group designed our communications strategy, helped organize two local area meetings last Fall and has produced two newsletters to date with a third underway. They also set up four major public meetings in April at which our needs and resources assessment findings were presented and thoroughly discussed.

The Needs and Resources Assessment Sub-Committee began its work last November. Their research work and information gathering included: compiling a detailed community demographic profile and use of relevant studies, developing extensive facility supply and use data on churches, libraries, schools and Centres, surveying seniors, apartment-dwellers, churches and recreation staff, conducting 13 deputation and outreach meetings with people familiar with local services and facilities and creating a comprehensive services matrix and map. During its five month existence, this group held 23 meetings and involved over 110 people in reaching its preliminary conclusions.

To ensure that our needs and resources assessment findings reflected general community perceptions and interest, we held four public meetings in the weeks of April 15 and 22. We planned and conducted these meetings with representatives of the four Resident Associations centered on Yonge and Eglinton, namely, Avenue Road/Eglinton, Sherwood Park, South Eglinton and Oriole Park. We advertised in the local papers and made extensive use of door-to-door flyers. In total, 127 residents participated adding some new ideas or views, voicing important planning concerns and in general, supporting our proposal.

1.3 Report Format

Given the above undertakings, it is our belief that the findings and conclusions that follow are based on a very

thorough needs and resources assessment and accurately reflect community interest in North Toronto. The substance of our findings is organized into the following sections:

- o the functions a Community Centre can play and an assessment of unmet needs in North Toronto;
- o a review of existing facility resources and an assessment of the current use and adequacy;
- o a preliminary review of potential sites and in particular, the suitability of Eglinton Park as the proposed site; and
- o our summation and recommendations.

As a necessary introduction to our assessment work, we feel it is important to set out our vision of what a Community Centre is. A Community Centre serves its community by providing opportunities for personal growth and enrichment, by encouraging group development and a sense of belonging, and by being a focal point for community participation. Activities provided or hosted by a Centre include leisure pursuits such as sports and physical recreation, artistic and creative programmes and cultural events. Centres also respond to people needing support or assistance by providing health, educational and social services and by connecting people to other resources in the community.

In summary, when we speak of a Community Centre, we are talking about a multi-purpose facility that balances leisure, recreational programming with supportive and developmental services, that is strongly connected to existing local programmes and organizations, and that is planned and directed by community people.

Why A New Centre for North Toronto?

In assessing the need for a new publicly financed Community Centre in North Toronto, one of the components is an overview of the current population and future trends. For our purposes, North Toronto is defined as that portion of the City of Toronto north of St. Clair Avenue west from Yonge Street, and Merton Street east from Yonge Street. The total population in 1981 was 98,553. The population is fairly stabile overall with more than 50% of the residents having lived at their current address for five years or more and has historically been overwhelmingly English-speaking (83%).

There are some statistics that begin to give us an indication of social needs:

- o 42% of all dwelling units are apartments;

- o 47% of all households consist of one person (23% of the population);
- o over 2700 families are headed by a lone parent;
- o at least 5100 children live in families where both parents work;
- o over 2000 seniors (12%) live alone; in total, seniors (65+) currently are the largest population group at 17,100 or 17% of the population.

These figures suggest that social isolation, for a variety of reasons, may affect a significant portion of our community.

Looking to the future, some factors appear to be at work which are significant to programme and facility planning. Population trends indicate a further decline in the family as a major focal point (currently 54% of all households are non-family), an increase in adult, rather than child, orientation (55% of the population are single persons or couples without children), a moderating decline in the number and proportion of children and youth, and an increase in seniors (20% of the population by 1991).

While personal income overall is not as critical a problem in this community as elsewhere in the City, 1300 families plus 6000 individuals live in poverty (1981 Census). The rest of the City is catching up in median family income to the point where the area's "lead" over the rest of the City is now 15%, down from 72% in 1971.

From other sources, it is clear that North Toronto lacks sufficient public resources to respond to normal, basic recreation needs. A 1984 study done by the City assessed the supply of specific recreation facilities against population and distance factors. For the City north of St. Clair Avenue, the following ratings can be drawn from that study:

Facility type	Difference From City Average Provision
Indoor Pools	- 3
Outdoor Pools	- 1
Regulation Gyms	- 5
General/multi-purpose rooms	-21

Moreover, other than two Centres (The Third Floor and the Northern YWCA) and three shared-use Recreation Centres (Bedford Park, Maurice Cody and Brown), the available programme spaces are supplied by schools, libraries and churches. The various limitations of existing resources leaves the area without a clear,

visible focal point and clearly undersupplied in terms of recreation facilities.

In summary, planning for the proposed Centre should consider the needs of isolated people such as seniors, lone parent families and latchkey children, should provide for outreach to adults and apartment-dwellers and should develop programmes for children and families. A deficiency in the basic provision of recreation facilities is restricting the opportunities for leisure activity.

What are the needs as stated by the community?

Thirteen Deputation/Outreach meetings were held with various groups in North Toronto to investigate and identify the need for a Community Centre. Outreach meetings were ones we held to get a representative, cross-sectional view of North Toronto. Deputation meetings were ones requested by groups with a specific proposal to make. The following groups participated in this process:

Outreach Meetings	Deputation meetings
Churches	Public Health Department
Services for seniors	North Toronto Hockey Association
Community Centres and Libraries	Upper Yonge Village Daycare
School representatives - P.T.A., Principals	Easter Seal
Teen Adolescent Services	Second Mile Foundation
	Community Inn
	Centennial Nursery School
	North Toronto Gyros

In addition to the above meetings or submissions, we also held two meetings with apartment-dwellers, surveyed seniors, churches, and POINT members and sought specific programme information from recreation staff and the YWCA and YMCA. A matrix of services was prepared that reinforced many of the gaps identified by this research. The matrix specifically identified gaps in community information and legal advice, day-time adult education, employment and career assistance and children's programming; eg., Moms-and-Tots, Infant Day Care.

There was a general consensus on a number of points. All groups stated that there was insufficient space to run the programmes being requested by the community and that much of the current supply is physically inadequate or not readily accessible. The kinds of social/recreational needs being identified included: infant and pre-school day care, concurrent parent and child programming, supervised adolescent activities, information and counselling services and comprehensive seniors activities. Examples of more specifically leisure/recreational needs were: gymnastics and fitness programmes, recreational and instructional swim, instructional and studio arts and crafts, theatre arts and adult social activities. The Centre should also endeavour to

provide recreational and social opportunities for organizations working with special needs groups.

How well are the existing facilities being used?

Our assessment of facility use covered: public and separate schools, churches, shared-use Community School/Centres, community and the YWCA Centres, and libraries. The uses made of the existing facilities include a wide range of on-going structured recreational, social and cultural programming, shorter term programmes and special events, and individual community bookings by local groups.

In terms of quantity, school facilities represent the largest publicly accessible system. A survey of schools and of several recreation and social service providers indicates that all school spaces are used at or near full capacity. Major spaces like gyms have long waiting lists. A number of restrictions both inhibit access to these facilities and work against the delivery of quality programming. These include:

- school spaces are not available from 9 AM to 6 PM weekdays during the school year or on school holidays and P.D. days;
- school programmes can pre-empt outside permits;
- permits are processed centrally for the entire system with no clear priority on local use;
- weekend use may involve payment to cover caretaker costs; and
- rooms are available, at best, once per week which severely restricts programmes like fitness.

Churches are an important resource for local groups especially for people like young children and seniors for whom distance is an issue. Our churches survey indicates that available facilities (meeting rooms, church halls, gyms) are moderately to heavily used. All churches reported a need for more space for agency offices, recreational programmes, day care and programmes for seniors and youth. They reported that a new Centre would complement their mission by allowing them to concentrate on local and small group programmes. Limitations of church space availability involved the fees charged, the smaller dimensions of their multi-purpose rooms and legal restrictions such as fire code standards.

Libraries and Centres run their own programmes, co-sponsor events with other organizations and accept bookings. All report full use of space and turn away significant numbers of applicants. With

the exception of the Memorial Gardens, fees are not a major problem. Centres report their own need to seek extra programme space in schools and churches to meet demand.

The Working Committee is aware of the need to utilize existing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. To that end, we have already undertaken to work with POINT and our local churches to examine improvements to programme planning and facility use. We are also consulting with agencies providing services to seniors with similar goals in mind.

In summary, for the above facility providers, we can document that existing space is being used at capacity. Universally, the groups contacted indicated that a new Centre would relieve the demands made on their resources and allow them to make better use of what they have. The above-mentioned restrictions or limitations in terms of quality, accessibility, quantity and suitability of existing spaces are having a negative effect on the quality and consistency of programme delivery, or programme planning in response to existing demands and on new service initiatives.

Why is Eglinton Park the proposed site?

The Working Committee felt it could not take the suggested site of Eglinton Park for granted. A special Potential Sites Review Group was struck by the Working Committee and assessed 11 sites regarding their overall suitability. The criteria used by this group included: (1) at the community level - impact on existing community facilities and programmes, degree of accessibility, degree of community identity and visibility; (2) at the neighbourhood level - impact related to traffic, parking, noise, etc., compatibility of built-form with neighbouring structures; (3) at the site level - capability of the site to carry a new structure, impact on green space, compatibility with existing facilities, adequate parking and access routes, etc. Their preliminary findings were that Eglinton Park was best suited on all criteria as the site for a central facility.

Specifically, the picture of Eglinton Park that emerged from this review is as follows. Transit access via subway and bus routes is excellent. The proposed site is central and easily accessible to a majority of the population. The clustering of community services on Yonge at Eglinton and at Davisville would be complemented and supported by the proposed Centre. Existing major outdoor facilities in the park would complement indoor programmes.

In addition to the advantages posed by this location, the present distribution of public facilities was taken into account. Existing Recreation Centres at Maurice Cody, Bedford Park and Brown Public Schools and The Third Floor Community Centre address some of the needs of their local neighbourhoods. Clusters of publicly accessible facilities of a non-Centre nature exist at

Lawrence and Avenue Road (a secondary and two public schools, the Otter Creek ice pads, a major park) and at Spadina and Eglinton Avenue West (a secondary school, a public school, a library, an arena, a large park) offer a sizeable amount of public programme space. The Avenue Road/Eglinton, Lytton and Oriole Park communities have no comparable facilities.

There remain, however, some serious neighbourhood concerns about the impact of the proposed Community Centre on their park. Local residents are clearly concerned that any new structure would eliminate well-used open space and detract from the appearance and function of the park. There are also definite problems with traffic and parking. In the next stage of planning, the Site and Building Design Sub-Committee will need to address the maximum preservation of open space and to consider the potential for direct access to Eglinton Avenue and the need for on-site and on-street parking solutions.

It became abundantly clear to us during our assessment work and community meetings that the current operations of the North Toronto Memorial Gardens and Arena were seen by the local community to be a major problem. Massive traffic congestion and irresponsible parking by arena users affects nearby residents ten months of the year. Late night noise at both the arena and Memorial Gardens buildings and the high rental fees charged for use of the latter are further irritants. There is an irrepressible determination that these issues be resolved even as the plans for the Community Centre go forward.

In summary, weighed against other sites and with full realization of the current problems that exist, we believe that the proposed site of Eglinton Park is the most appropriate location for a central facility.

Conclusions:

In light of the above, we feel confident that in making the following statements, we have done a thorough assessment and have fully consulted our community and reflected their thoughts:

1) A new Community Centre would complement existing services and would relieve pressure felt by churches, community centres and school facilities with respect to the demand for additional space. With an information and resource service, this Centre could help to put people in touch with other programmes in Toronto.

2) The Community Centre should be a fully accessible, multi-purpose facility offering a mix of structured and unstructured programming on a year round basis.

3) With reference to the unmet needs identified above, the Centre's role would be to provide a mix of leisure, recreational activities and supportive or developmental programmes. For programmes which could not be appropriately accommodated at the new Centre, the Working Committee would seek out alternate locations.

4) Some specific proposals for further consideration are:

- o a senior's component offering a variety of recreational, social, educational and health programmes in one location;
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- o organized programming focused on teens.

5) Given our facility resources assessment, we are recommending to Council that a new Community Centre to be located in Eglinton Park should consist of at least a 25 meter pool, a regulation gym, one or more multi-purpose rooms, some office space and a resource/information service.

6) We have recommended that People and Organizations in North Toronto (POINT) with assistance from the City respond to the interest expressed by many churches to develop more effective and efficient programming and use of existing church facilities.

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9) We are recommending to Council that it address the problems expressed by the community arising from the current use of the North Toronto Memorial Gardens and Arena and Eglinton Park.

Recommendations:

1. That Council adopt this report of the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee as its agreement in principle to the creation of a new Community Centre in North Toronto.

2. That Council authorize the North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee to proceed with development of programming, site and building design, and management model concepts including associated capital and operating cost implications and to report back.

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Letha Whyte

Letha Whyte, Chairperson
North Toronto Community
Centre Working Committee

(NT2)

SHERWOOD PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

51 Stibbard Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 2B9

May 8,1985

North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee
Planning and Development Department
City Hall, Toronto, Ontario

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Sherwood Park Residents' Association and its members I wish to express our support of the North Toronto Community Centre.

The members of the public who came to the public meeting held in our area were in support of a community centre in Eglinton Park.

I would like to express our appreciation for the detailed and useful information presented to us from the Needs and Resources Assesment Sub-Committee. We were pleased that our directors Janet Bryson and Grace Brown were available to work on this project and look forward to their continued involvement.

Yours Truly

Phil Aber
President

c.c. Alderman Rowlands
Alderman Walker
Letha Whyte,Chairperson:North Toronto Community Centre Working Committee